



SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION CENTER
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STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY: WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Leaders Must Come Together To Keep Promises: "I think it's also important for our elected leaders, both Democrats and Republicans, to come to the table. The American people now understand we have a problem. And our leaders must choose: Do nothing and guarantee a massive tax hike, or a 30 percent benefit cut; or act now to keep the promises of Social Security for the 21st century." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On Social Security, Canton, MS, 5/3/05) [Read The Transcript.](#)

Personal Accounts Working Aboard: "It just so happens that I think George Bush is doing something interesting with Social Security. The program does need to be fixed or recalibrated or something, and he has had the guts to take it on. Moreover, I kind of like the idea of personal investment accounts if funding them does not weaken the overall program or add to the nation's incredible debt. After all, there is something to be said for expanding the number of American worker-capitalists and having a nest egg an heir could inherit, or one that would not be eliminated by death. The idea is not all that radical, after all. It's being done in other countries -- Australia, Sweden, Chile, Britain." (Richard Cohen, "Social Security, Day By Day," *The Washington Post*, 5/3/05) [Read The Article.](#)

Reform Looks Promising: "With the completion of the administration's '60 Stops in 60 Days' advocating strengthening Social Security, the debate pivots, shifting from convincing voters about the problem to persuading lawmakers to craft solutions. Despite persistent media doubts, the fog shrouding the lawmaking end zone will begin to lift, revealing why naysayers are wrong. Legislative success is a combination of momentum, focus and attention from the right people. Social Security includes generous dollops of all three - beginning with a president spending an unprecedented amount of time dishing out political capital, visiting 22 states in the past three months to talk up the issue." (Gary J. Andres, "Saving Social Security," *The Washington Times*, 5/5/05) [Read The Column.](#)

Arizona U.S. Rep. Kolbe - Bipartisanship Can Be Achieved: "I am confident bipartisanship can be achieved. Rep. Allen Boyd [D-FL] and I have already shown that by co-sponsoring legislation that includes personal retirement accounts. We have approached Social Security as a problem that requires us to reach beyond partisanship. We agree that any solution for Social Security requires making tough choices and compromises for the benefit of future generations. Our bill is only one example of how we might fix the problems with Social Security. ... It is time for the rhetoric to stop. ... No one wants the door to shut on our grandchildren's retirement security." (Rep. Jim Kolbe (AZ), "Social Security Requires Effort By Both Parties," *Tucson Citizen*, 5/5/05) [Read The Column.](#)

Factcheck.org - Sets Record Straight On Progressive Indexing: "President Bush announced April 28 that he is embracing a proposal to address Social Security's financial shortfall by slowing the growth of future benefits for higher-income and middle-income workers, but not for lower-income workers. It is important to remember that these figures are in relation what the current benefit formula promises, not what current law can actually deliver. ... If nothing is done, benefits will automatically be reduced for all persons receiving them. Without a tax increase or some other additional revenue, those built-in reductions would start at 26 percent in 2041, rise to 32 percent by 2078 and keep rising every year after that. And that would apply to everybody receiving benefit checks - rich and poor alike." (Factcheck.org, <http://www.factcheck.org/article323.html>, 4/29/05) [Read The Article.](#)

Proposal Is 'Good-Faith Attempt At Compromise': "If America was listening, it heard a conservative Republican president make one of the most progressive reform proposals in the program's long history. ... For those who made the most, the buying power of their Social Security benefits would track inflation. For those who made the least, benefits would climb with wages, which rise faster than inflation. ... The plan - the brainchild of

investment company chairman Robert Pozen, a Democrat - would protect the poorest Americans by limiting the increase in benefits for the richest Americans to the rate of price inflation. That preserves Social Security's safety net for those who need it most, while limiting payments to those who will need them least. Pozen's plan would ensure that the buying power of benefits doesn't fall for anybody. It represents a responsible, good-faith attempt at compromise, which makes the Democrats' overheated rhetoric so puzzling." ("A Daring Proposal For Social Security," *The Virginian-Pilot*, 5/4/05) [Read The Editorial](#)

Latino Coalition Attendee On Personal Accounts - 'You Get To Leave Something You've Earned': "President Bush pitched his Social Security restructuring plan to Latinos on Wednesday, saying his approach would extend the benefits of ownership to low-wage workers who otherwise might not save for retirement. ... Several Latinos at the conference said they liked Bush's emphasis on expanding ownership by allowing workers to accumulate retirement nest eggs. 'What I liked most is that the money you put in goes to your family,' said Justo Frias, who works in Los Angeles for the Gigante supermarket chain. 'You get to leave something you've earned.'" (Warren Vieth and Sara Clarke, "President Highlights Social Security Plan's Benefits for Latinos," *The Los Angeles Times*, 5/5/05) [Read The Article.](#)

Secretary Snow - Personal Accounts Are Empowering: "One of the President's core beliefs on this issue is that we ought to move toward a system that is pre-funded, that we should gradually move away from a pay-as-you-go model and give Americans the chance to save their own money. He wants to move away from the filling cabinet of IOUs and toward something that people actually own and that represents real capital. Voluntary personal accounts are a step toward pre-funding the system, and that's going to put it on a more stable, guaranteed basis down the road. ... This is an exciting and empowering proposition, and best of all we know that it can be done without disrupting the system of benefits for their parents and other generations of retired beneficiaries." (Secretary John Snow, Remarks To The American Academy Of Actuaries' Spring Meeting, 5/3/05) [Read The Speech.](#)

Vice President - Middle Income Workers Can Choose Better Deal With Personal Accounts: "If you are, say, today starting out, a worker under this system we proposed, earning an average annual income of about \$35,000 a year, by the time you reach retirement age, you'd have a nest egg of a quarter of a million dollars in your account. That would be there to supplement your Social Security. And it would be, net, a better deal than if you'd taken that same 4 percent and put it in at about 1.8 percent into the Social Security trust fund. ... We think that's a good way to go. We think it makes sense not only because it would provide a better return for the individual worker, but it also, obviously, involves the element of ownership -- you own it, it's yours, nobody can take it away from you." (Vice President Dick Cheney, Remarks At A Town Hall Meeting, Smyrna, GA, 5/2/05) [Read The Transcript.](#)

Assistant Treasury Secretary Warshawsky - Progressive Indexing Is A Better Deal: "Under the president's plan, future seniors would receive benefits that are at least as high as today's seniors. The lowest-income Americans would see the fastest growth, while medium-wage workers would also receive higher benefits, even after adjusting for inflation, than the system currently pays out. For the highest-earning seniors, benefits would grow no faster than inflation... Plus, if younger workers are allowed the option of putting a portion of their payroll taxes into a voluntary personal account, those workers could earn a nest egg and the opportunity to receive a higher rate of return than the current Social Security system can provide." (Mark J. Warshawsky, "Letter To The Editor," *The Boston Globe*, 5/6/05) [Read The Letter.](#)

Krauthammer - Fair And Progressive Plan: "No one gets cut -- either in nominal or real dollars. Everyone gets at least as much or more than any retiree today, with the poor getting progressively more every year. This is about as fair and progressive a plan as you can find. Even the inveterately, reflexively, often apoplectically anti-Bush Michael Kinsley expressed admiration -- and indeed puzzlement that the president would offer it without any prospect of short-term political advantage." (Charles Krauthammer, "The Same Old Saw On Social Security," *The Washington Post*, 5/6/05) [Read The Column.](#)